

## Patients' Medical History

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Many patients do not realize the importance of medical history when they are asked to fill the history form, or on being questioned by the clinician. Patients may not disclose cured, or latent medical illnesses, although, these may have a significant bearing on dental procedures carried out on them or on medication which may be required during or after dental treatment. Many systemic conditions or diseases have oral manifestations e.g. Down's syndrome patients suffer from severe form of periodontitis, and have a high caries index. Others may exacerbate the response to dental diseases, e.g. hormonal imbalance may exacerbate the host response to bacterial



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plaque at puberty, in pregnancy and at menopause. Similarly, ongoing or past therapies for many other systemic conditions or diseases may influence or modify dental treatment protocols. For example, hypertension controlled or uncontrolled, may influence the choice of local anaesthetics with or without vaso-constrictors during tooth extraction or surgeries. Similarly, active or controlled diabetes may strongly influence any surgical procedures like extraction, periodontal treatment or implant insertion etc.

Thorough questioning will reveal any current condition as well as any past illnesses, which may have a bearing on proper diagnosis and successful treatment. Usually the patients are given a form to fill up without the dentist or assistant reviewing the form or going into details filled therein. However, careful analysis of the medical history at the first appointment, and timely updating the same is mandatory to avoid any medical emergency on the dental chair.

In brief, detailed medical history of present or past illnesses may necessitate a change in treatment procedures and medication, and unquestionably it is the dentist's responsibility. Moreover, a detailed recording of medical history is essential in cases of consumer complaints and medico-legal issues.

**Editor**